



City of Albany
Dept. of Development & Planning
21 Lodge Street
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City of Albany, NY
Midtown Colleges and University Study
Draft Plan
September 2005



URS Corporation
Institutional Project Management, LLC



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INTRODUCTION

Purpose

This study presents an assessment of the opportunities within the Midtown Colleges and University District (the “Study Area”), provides the City of Albany the *Midtown Colleges and University District Redevelopment Plan* (the “Plan”), and outlines an implementation agenda (as discussed in Section 2) to accomplish plan objectives. In January of 2004 the City of Albany was awarded a grant from the New York State, Department of State (DOS) Quality Communities program to conduct a study of the investment activities and development opportunities of the institutions of higher education in Albany’s “Midtown”. The purpose of the study was to see how these activities could be leveraged within the Albany community to help stimulate revitalization of the neighborhoods both encompassing and immediately adjacent to Midtown colleges and university campuses. The consulting team comprised of URS Corporation (URS) and Institutional Project Management LLC (IPM) was engaged by the Albany Department of Development and Planning to develop a unified strategy and implementation plan, addressing the existing and future needs of the numerous institutions of higher education and the neighborhoods within the Study Area. The consulting firms brought together the perspectives of market analysts; urban designers and planners (URS); and institutional experts (IPM).

The Study Area is home to a number of distinguished institutions of higher education and research. These institutions include:

- SUNY At Albany Downtown
- The College of St. Rose
- The Sage Colleges
- Albany College of Pharmacy
- Albany College of Law
- Albany Medical College
- Albany Medical Center

Together, these institutions account for over 10,400 students in the area (not including the students at SUNY’s Uptown Campus). A number of these institutions are currently experiencing and/or are planning for growth in terms of enrollment and depth of programming, resulting in increased development needs for housing, classroom, administrative, research, and performing arts space. In summary, the institutions have significant demographic and economic presence in a concentrated area. The Plan examines these increased institutional development needs with the goal of anchoring new economic vitality in this key district of Albany.

This Plan recognizes that the traditional, historical stance of higher educational institutions has been to close themselves off to the surrounding community to the point of becoming fully self-contained communities. However, economic and demographic trends between academic institutions and communities are transforming this stance. The potential for institutions to lead urban community revitalization is slowly being realized by select institutions across the country interested in economic development and civic engagement within their communities. This growing trend is breaking into the mainstream as institutions are taking note of the social and fiscal benefits of forming public-private partnerships aimed at redevelopment projects in their

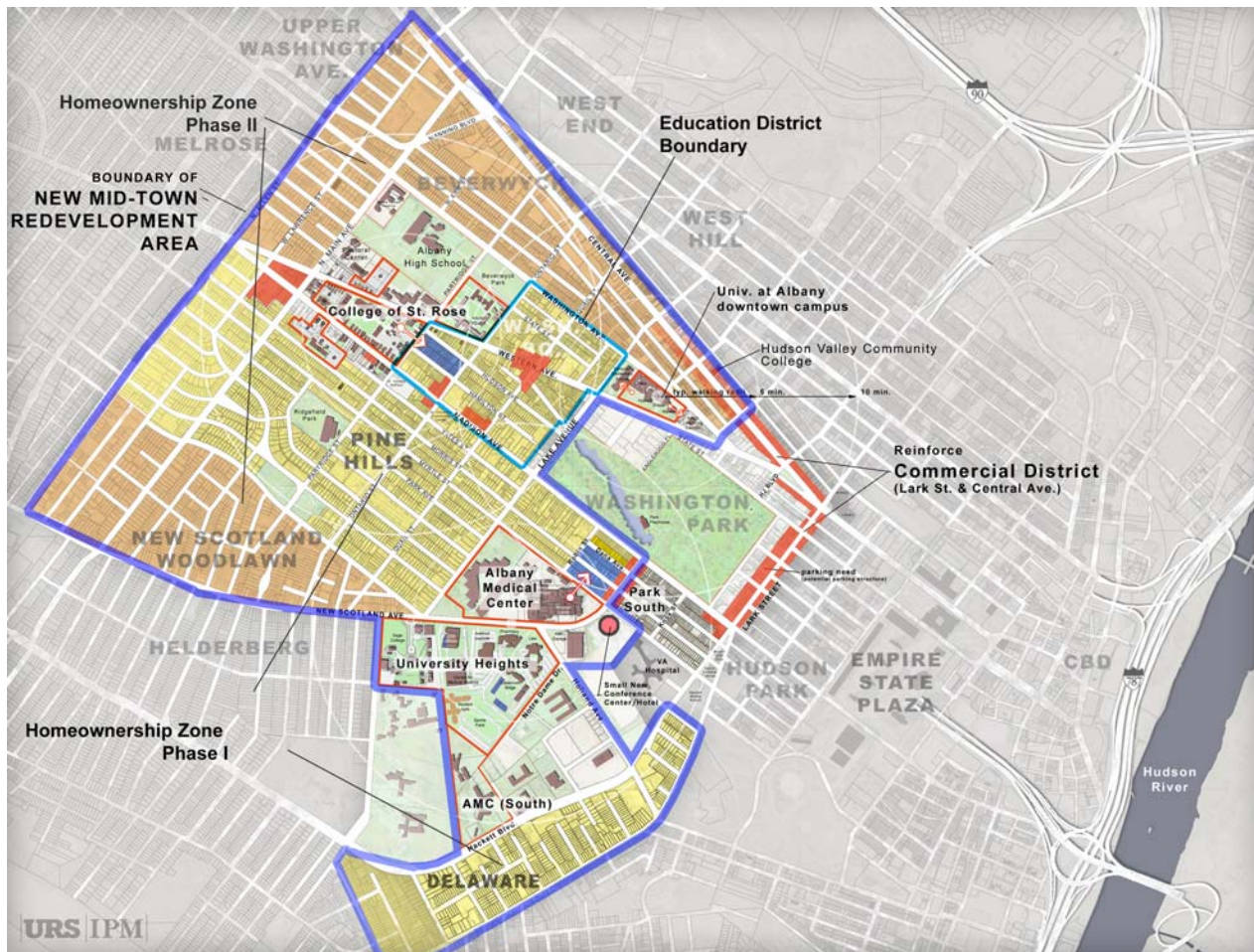
surrounding communities. This Plan provides the overall framework to leverage the investment opportunities and programming needs of these institutions to transform the Study Area into a vibrant urban district, where people will want to live, work, learn, shop and play.

Several planning studies have been undertaken over the years to address the declining economic and physical conditions within select areas of the Study Area and surrounding areas. Among these initiatives are the Park South Redevelopment Plan in 2004 by Design Collective, Inc. and Randall Gross/Development Economics; the AveNew 2000 Strategic Plan for the Revitalization of Central Avenue by Goody, Clancy & Associates; the Convention Center Market & Economic Impact Analysis Report in December 2001 and Update Report in May 2004 by Strategic Advisory Group; and the Albany Abandoned Properties Strategy Report in June 2004 by The Enterprise Foundation. This Plan builds off of these existing planning studies and research to encourage further economic development growth within the Study Area.

The Midtown Colleges and University District Study Area

The Study Area is located in the central portion of the City of Albany and is generally bounded by Central Avenue on the northeast; Lexington Avenue, Lake Avenue, New Scotland Avenue and Delaware Avenue on the east; New Scotland Avenue, Academy Road, and Delaware Avenue on the south, and North Allen Street on the west as illustrated in Figure 1. The Study Area includes the campuses of the respective institutions and the Beverwyck, Washington Square, Delaware, New Scotland/Woodland and Pine Hills Neighborhoods, and the northwest portion of the Park South Neighborhood. The Study Area is located a few blocks west of the Lark Street retail/entertainment district and the Empire State Plaza in downtown Albany and is adjacent to Washington Park. Approximately 2.5 miles northwest of the Study Area is SUNY's Uptown Campus and the Harriman State Office Campus along Washington Avenue. The Study Area boundaries were identified through the input and consensus of City staff, the key institutions, neighborhood groups and residents, and the Consultant Team's recommendations.

Figure 1: Study Area Plan



Demographics

The demographic Study Trade Area for the purposes of socio-economic analysis for this project has been defined as the area within a 1-mile radius from the Madison Avenue and Lake Avenue intersection. Listed below are the major demographic and socio-economic characteristics of this area.

- The estimated 2000 population was 38,139 persons, which has declined by approximately 0.5% since 1990.
- Almost two thirds of the 17,123 households are non-family households with close to 50 percent of the trade area residing in single person households. Over 75% of the occupied residential structures in the trade area are renter occupied. These household characteristics are consistent with the area being popular with college students and young professionals.
- The average age of residents within the one-mile trade radius is 29.3 years, while the one-half mile trade radius indicates a younger population at 25.6 years, which indicates a

heavy concentration of college students in close proximity to the various institutions as well as a higher concentration of multi-unit dwellings versus single-family structures.

- Median household income of the trade area population is \$29,467, which is slightly less than the City of Albany at \$30,041 – reflective of the large number of students in the area.

Process

The plan was guided by the Midtown Colleges and University Technical Committee, a body representing the various institutional stakeholders, as well as residents, students, and local business owners through the dialogue generated from a series of public meetings. The Technical Committee was formed and began meeting in January of 2004 upon notification of the DOS grant award, prior to the hiring of the consultant. Following a Request for Proposal (RFP) process, the consultant team of URS and IPM, of Chicago, was retained. The team was selected due to their previous experience with “town-gown” planning processes. The Technical Committee attended a series of meetings with the consultant from June of 2004 to January of 2005 to identify the needs of their respective institutions and the investments that could be made to leverage neighborhood improvements.

A focus group meeting was held in February of 2005 where student representatives from each of the involved institutions met with the Mayor and the Department of Development and Planning to discuss the concept of “Midtown” and the planning study that was being conducted. Students provided feedback on the type of neighborhoods they wanted to live in, and identified commercial and retail opportunities they felt were missing from the neighborhoods. Students also expressed concern regarding public safety and public transportation. Comments received from this meeting are included in the “Public Input” section of the Appendix E.

In March of 2005 an initial public meeting was held at Saint Joseph’s Hall on the College of Saint Rose campus to announce the findings of the planning study and begin the public input process on the initial plan concepts. More than 200 attendees provided considerable public input, including the recommendations that a subsequent series of individual neighborhood meetings to discuss the plan be conducted. Staff from the Department of Development and Planning then met with nine neighborhood associations immediately within or adjacent to the plan boundaries for the remainder of the month of March, and April to garner further public input. A second public meeting was held in May of 2005 where plan concepts that were revised and refined as a result of public input were presented to the public. A public comment period on the final plan will be left open until the end of June 2005. Comments received from these various public meetings are included in the “Public Input” section of the Appendix E.

Plan Objectives

The *Plan* is intended to provide a guide for physical improvement and development within the Study Area over a 10-year period. Market and physical site conditions were assessed to develop

a strategy that is grounded in the economic realities of both the institutions and the neighborhoods.

The primary objectives of the Plan are to:

1. Identify development and partnership opportunities that leverage institutional investment into new levels of private investment in the surrounding areas.
2. Enable institutional expansion through the provision of appropriate planning tools and public/private partnerships.
3. Create an “on-going” framework for planning and dialogue between institutions, residents, and businesses.
4. Strengthen adjacent residential neighborhoods by stimulating new and rehabilitated single and multi-family housing
5. Expand, upgrade and integrate student housing within the neighborhoods.
6. Improve the ability of area businesses to meet the day-to-day needs of residents, employees, students, and visitors.
7. Upgrade the image and appearance of the Study Area, including the public rights-of-way and existing buildings.
8. Strengthen existing retail nodes with the promotion of “higher and better” commercial uses.
9. Establish an implementation strategy to carry out Plan objectives

Analysis of Existing Conditions and Market Potential

Institutional Development

Presently, the eight institutions within the Study Area have over 10,400 students, plus approximately 4,000 students that attend class at SUNY’s Uptown Campus but reside within the Study Area. Three of these institutions, *Albany College of Pharmacy*, *College of St. Rose*, and *the Albany Medical Center/College*, are planning for growth within the next few years, which is expected to increase the student population by an additional 800 students, as well as increase employment and classroom/administration space for these institutions. In terms of expansion, area institutions are faced with numerous challenges. Such challenges include being located in a fully built environment and surrounded by mature residential neighborhoods with minimal available sites on which to expand.

University Heights Association (UHA) was established in 1995 as a freestanding, non-profit 501 (c)(3) corporation and has been instrumental in fostering collaboration between the Albany College of Pharmacy, Albany Law School, Albany Medical Center, and The Sage Colleges, helping to create a more unified campus for these institutions. Opportunities exist to extend this effort beyond the UHA campus and collaborate with the other institutions in the area to create a

larger coordinated and distinctive campus district that would benefit all the institutions in terms of recruitment, community development, and neighborhood safety.

Our interviews and review of campus plan documents significant growth plans for the College of St. Rose, the Albany College of Pharmacy, and the Albany Medical Center. The table below highlights the priority needs for additional physical space for all the institutions in the area.

The majority of Albany Medical Center's expansion needs will be accommodated in the Park South neighborhood, immediately adjacent to the Center's current campus. Of all the institutions, The College of St. Rose has the most need in terms of space and types of uses. The Albany College of Pharmacy can accommodate most of its growth on its current campus and/or sites they have acquired.

Student Housing

There is strong potential for additional dedicated undergraduate student housing to upgrade existing housing needs and accommodate future demand. It is estimated that there is demand for 350 – 450 dedicated student apartments within the next five years and an additional 250 – 350 apartments within the next 6 to 10 years. Such volume of units provides the opportunity to develop a shared and coordinated student housing development between the various institutions, similar to the University Heights College Suites 429-bed dorm facility. The strong demand for student housing offers the opportunity to build facilities as mixed-use developments, offering one, two, and four-bedroom suites with convenience retail located on the ground floor to serve both students and neighborhood residents.

Institutional Future Needs Summary

		Future						Comments
		Office	Housing	Parking	Class Rooms	Student Centers	Athletic Facilities	
Albany College of Pharmacy	-->	n/a	High	High	n/a	High	n/a	
Sage Albany	-->	Medium	n/a	n/a	Medium	n/a	n/a	Art Supply Store
College of St. Rose	-->	High	High	High	High	n/a	High	High -- Performing Art Theater
SUNY Downtown	-->	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	Renovation of Husted Bldg (Summer 2005), Expansion based on opportunities
Albany Law	-->	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	
Albany Medical Center/College	-->	High	Medium	High	n/a	n/a	n/a	High Priorities -- research, clinical facilities, campus infrastructure
Hudson Valley	-->	n/a	n/a	High	Medium	n/a	n/a	

Residential Development

In terms of attracting new residents to urban city neighborhoods, the City of Albany faces the challenge of competing with the surrounding suburbs that have stronger public school systems, appreciating property values, and minimal commute times. The Study Area exhibits potential for new for-sale and rental residential development, as well as opportunities for marketing and upgrading the existing housing stock in the immediate and near future. Below the characteristics of the neighborhoods of Pine Hills, New Scotland/ Woodlawn, Delaware Avenue, Beverwyck, and Park South, all located within the study area boundary are briefly described.

Pine Hills is west and north west of University Heights with a resident population of approximately 12,000. Pine Hills is a diverse neighborhood in central Albany. The neighborhood is home to many college students from the University at Albany, and the College of St. Rose. The neighborhood is also home to many families who make the neighborhood their home year round. The downtown campus of the State University of New York at Albany and The College of Saint Rose are within the northern area of the neighborhood and a large student population has historically rented nearby. More traditional one and two family housing is located closest to University Heights. This area is within easy walking distance. Pine Hills contains several neighborhood commercial service clusters, schools, churches, and playgrounds. National Little League and Ridgefield Park provide public fields, playgrounds, tennis courts, and community gardening opportunities within walking distance. The neighborhood is served by elementary schools PS #10 and 19.

The New Scotland/Woodlawn Neighborhood is a quiet residential area north and west of University Heights. The population is around 3000. New Scotland/ Woodlawn is an attractive neighborhood for buyers seeking affordable single-family homes, and for renters seeking a quiet environment. Tree lined streets contain detached one and two family homes developed in 1920-1940. The owner occupancy rate is higher than the City and the real estate market is stable. Educational, religious, and commercial uses are located nearby on New Scotland Avenue and Whitehall Road. These include PS #19, St. Teresa of Lima Church and School, commercial strips, and Temple Israel. Recreation is available at Ridgefield Park and the Albany Jewish Community Center.

The Delaware Avenue Neighborhood Area is south of University Heights. The neighborhood has a population of around 10,000. The central road spine of the neighborhood is Delaware Avenue, one of the City's major arterials, providing a route into and out of the city for commuters each day. At the same time, the street is the neighborhood main street for residents. People are attracted to Delaware Avenue for its mixed-use character, local neighborhood businesses, convenient shopping, restaurants, and entertainment facilities. The surrounding residential development consists primarily of 1 to 5 unit-detached dwellings on narrow lots. This is a strong rental neighborhood, with pockets of owner occupied family housing. Street layout and geography make Delaware Avenue relatively less accessible to University Heights on foot than

the other neighborhoods described. The Delaware Avenue Neighborhood Association is a very active group. The St. James Church and School were historically a central gathering place. The parochial school remains well attended. Public elementary education is available at PS 18.

The Beverwyck neighborhood is residential neighborhood of 2,837 located between two of Albany's busiest thoroughfares. The Beverwyck Neighborhood is located between Central and Washington Avenues and North Main Avenue to the East, Manning Boulevard to the west. Located just north of the Saint Rose College Campus within its bounds you will find Albany Public High School and St. Anne's Institute for Girls. Bus lines and small stores catering to the neighborhood are within walking distance as well as city schools and many churches. Summer neighborhood activity centers around Beverwyck Park where you will find garage sales and ice cream socials. Most homes in the neighborhood are between 120 and 140 years old and offer a great diversity of architectural and period styles.

The Park South neighborhood is well situated between educational institutions known as University Heights, employers, and other assets. It is sandwiched between Albany's beautiful Washington Park on the north and Albany Medical Center and the University Heights campus on the southern and northern borders. Lark Street, a vibrant, eclectic commercial and neighborhood district, is the eastern boundary of Park South. The Pine Hills neighborhood is to the West (see description). Park South covers approximately 25.8 acres of land within 9 city blocks and has a population of approximately 1,828. Park South is primarily residential area where the vast majority of housing units are rental within two to three family homes built in the 1920-40. Some structures were constructed in the late 1800s to early 1900s. There are a few apartment buildings with five or more units. The apartment styles available vary widely from classic three bedroom flats to smaller SRO style units. The neighborhood is walking distance from health care, a full service grocery store, and active commercial districts. It is on a bus line. The Boys and Girls Club and Albany Senior Center facilities are there. Cumulatively they offer a rich variety of after-school, weekend and summer activities for youth and seniors.

Rehabilitation and home ownership programs detailed in Section 1 are recommended for all the existing neighborhoods in the Study Area.

The niche markets that will most likely create the strongest demand for new residential development and rehabilitation are the population segments wanting to take advantage of the conveniences of an urban neighborhood, which include the following:

- Urban Professionals (single and couples with no children)
- Undergraduate/Graduate Students
- Staff and faculty of area institutions
- Empty nesters
- Seniors

It is recommended that denser housing types, such as rental apartments, condos, and townhomes be built in the early years of redevelopment to make the most impact and stimulate commercial development in response to the increased population density of the area. A concurrent phase of the redevelopment will include more scattered infill development and residential upgrades to the existing housing stock.

Retail Development

Based on research regarding socio-economics of the area, retail expenditure trends, retail coverage patterns, traffic volumes, resident, student and workforce population growth, and physical location and accessibility of the Study Area, it is concluded that the Study Area could attract an additional 20,000 – 30,000 square feet of new/upgraded neighborhood retail and entertainment businesses over the five year period within the C-1 Neighborhood Commercial Districts located within the Plan boundary. The majority of new retail development would occur between years 5 – 10, after the Study Area becomes more densely populated by the decrease in vacancies and with new residential development.

New/upgraded retail space could include store types such as grocery stores, banks, video/dvd stores, restaurants/bars, drug stores, music stores, art supply store, coffee shops, and dry cleaners. It is recommended that the majority of this retail be incorporated into mixed-use developments, where retail is located on the ground floor and residential is located above, to help create an active urban street environment.

Hotel Development

Based on market findings detailed in this report, a limited service hotel development is recommended along New Scotland Avenue near the Park South Neighborhood. These locations would take advantage of the close proximity to Washington Park and the entertainment/shopping district of Lark Street between Washington and Madison Avenues, as well close proximity to the area institutions. Hotel development would serve as an anchor for the New Scotland Avenue commercial corridor, helping to strengthen and encourage additional investment in the immediate area.

Office Development

The Study Area does not have a strong drawing power for major office use due to its close proximity to Albany's CBD. Office development for the small business market segment presents an opportunity to develop replacement space with modern design standards and amenities. It is recommended that replacement office development be incorporated into mixed-use development projects in the Study Area.

Park South Redevelopment Plan

Park South is currently seeking designation as an urban renewal district, and the selection of a development team to facilitate the redevelopment goals of the Park South Plan. Given Park South's strategic location near the various institutions, Washington Park, and the Lark Street commercial district, presents a significant opportunity to initiate the larger redevelopment effort and attract new residential development, particularly in certain niche market segments.

Summary of Market Conclusions

The following summary table highlights the development potential for the various uses in terms of short-term development potential (within the next five years) and long-term development potential, where development is expected to occur within the next six to ten years.

Table 1: Summary Development Potentials, by Type of Development, 2005 – 2015
(Background and Table in Appendix A)

Development Type	Development Potential	
	Short Term, 1 - 5 Years	Long Term, 6 -10 Years
RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT		
1. For-Rent Residences		
a. 1 and 2-Bedroom Units Rents: \$1.00+ psf	150 - 200 units	50 - 100 units
2. For-Sale Residences		
a. Condos		
1,200 -1,400 sf, \$140,000 - \$170,000	25 - 30 units	25 - 30 units
1,800 - 2,200 sf, \$225,000 - \$250,000	N/A	10 - 20 units
b. Townhomes		
1,600 - 2,000 sf, \$170,000 - \$200,000	10 - 15 units	10 - 15 units
2,000 - 2,500 sf, \$250,000 - \$300,000	N/A	10 - 20 units
3. Affordable Senior Housing	N/A	100 - 150 units
4. Student Housing Apartment Development	350 - 450 units	250 - 350 units
Total Residential Units*	535 - 695 units	455 - 685 units
INSTITUTIONAL DEVELOPMENT		
1. Albany Medical Center		
a. Office, Parking, Clinical and Research Facilities, and Housing for Staff	Short-Term Priority	N/A
2. College of St. Rose		
a. Office, Parking, Classrooms, Performing Arts Theater	Short-Term Priority	Long-Term Priority
b. Housing (Included above in Res. Sect.)	Short-Term Priority	N/A
3. Albany College of Pharmacy		
a. Parking, Student Center, Housing	Short-Term Priority	N/A
4. Sage Albany		
a. Office and Classroom Space	N/A	Long-Term Priority
5. Hudson Valley Community College		
a. Parking and Classroom Space	Short-Term Priority	N/A
RETAIL DEVELOPMENT		
1. Neighborhood Retail	20,000 - 30,000 SF	60,000 - 80,000 SF
2. Grocery Store w/in 3-mile Trade Area	100,000 - 150,000 SF	N/A
HOTEL DEVELOPMENT		
1. Limited Service Hotel, 100 - 125 rms	Short-Term Priority	N/A
OFFICE DEVELOPMENT		
1. Replacement/upgrade space for small businesses on an as needed basis		

* In addition, a code enforcement and rehabilitation strategy should be undertaken to upgrade several hundred housing units in existing neighborhoods.

Guiding Principles and Plan Recommendations

Based on the public input obtained from the neighborhood, student focus group(s), and Technical Committee meetings the plan is organized into three areas of focus: Homeownership, Midtown Education District, and Neighborhood Commercial Districts. A working group of neighborhood representatives, business owners, and institutional stakeholders has been established to facilitate and guide the marketing of each one of these plan components, with a particular focus on homeownership and City living. In addition to the already established Technical Committee a working group of neighborhood representatives, business owners, and institutional stakeholders was also established to help guide the implementation of the plan and disseminate information regarding public meetings and plan progress reports.

Homeownership Guiding Principles

- A. Utilize the employment base of the institutions of higher education to increase rates of homeownership
- B. Encourage rehabilitation of existing housing stock
- C. Encourage high quality rehabilitation
- D. Protect the mixed income nature of Midtown neighborhoods

Action Items

- A. Work with the colleges to create an Employer Assisted Housing Program.
- B. Identify additional funding sources for both homeownership and rehabilitation grants/loans.
- C. Form a marketing committee consisting of college and neighborhood representatives to help market homeownership and rehabilitation programs.
- D. Create a Homeownership Zone and outline the phasing of the Zone.
- E. Identify additional incentives to be offered within the Homeownership Zone.
- F. Perform a windshield survey of the housing stock to target homes to participate in rehabilitation programs.
- G. Review City's current tax abatement program.

Midtown Education District Principles

- A. Identify and leverage opportunities for collaboration among institutions for the betterment of institutions, businesses, and neighborhoods
- B. Create consensus among community and institutions regarding where and in what manner institutional growth should occur
- C. Create forum for regular communication/dialogue among institutions and neighborhoods
- D. Work to improve quality of life conditions in District

Midtown Colleges & University District Plan Report

Action Items

- A. Encourage institutions to update/create their campus master plans.
- B. Complete a housing conditions survey of Education District sub-area.
- C. Utilize conditions survey and campus plans to conduct block-planning initiatives within Education sub-area.
- D. Pursue community-university partnerships with public schools, community-outreach and volunteer organizations.
- E. Utilize the Community-University Relations Board to strengthen dialogue about public safety and quality of life issues between institutions, students, residents, and business owners.
- F. Create a Parking sub-committee of the Midtown Technical Committee to explore parking and traffic issues among institutions and possible shared solutions.

Neighborhood Commercial District Principles

- A. Work with neighborhoods, institutions, and existing businesses to strengthen commercial uses in Midtown.
- B. Strengthen and protect existing C-1 Districts
- C. Maintain and protect pedestrian-oriented commercial development
- D. Identify and target commercial uses currently absent from existing C-1 districts

Action Items

- A. Work with institutions to determine what retail and commercial needs students have a demand for that are not being serviced on campus.
- B. Work with residents and business owners create a priority list of improvement needs for existing C-1 districts as well as building consensus own what uses are wanted and unwanted within the district.
- C. Develop a framework for block planning within each C-1 district with neighborhood representatives, business owners, and City representatives.
- D. Enhance and enforce design standards within the C-1 districts to ensure that their character will not be impacted by any adaptive reuse or redevelopment.
- E. Utilize the Neighborhood Marketing Committees being formed to promote homeownership to also focus on marketing the C-1 districts as amenities to City Living.
- F. Focus on recruitment of new businesses that will be compatible within existing C-1 districts where there are vacancies.

SECTION 1: STRATEGIC PLAN COMPONENTS

The plan is organized into three focus areas: Homeownership, a Midtown Education District, and Neighborhood Commercial Districts. Each Plan component includes a set of guiding principles, recommendations on best practices, and action items to provide implementation framework.

- Homeownership
- Midtown Education District
- Neighborhood Commercial Districts

Homeownership

Homeownership Guiding Principles

- A. Utilize the employment base of the institutions of higher education to increase rates of homeownership
- B. Encourage rehabilitation of existing housing stock
- C. Encourage high quality rehabilitation
- D. Protect the mixed income nature of Midtown neighborhoods

Best Practices

Sustainable homeownership programs throughout the Capital Region and nation were researched, identifying four programs as “Best Practices”. The following are examples of Best Practice in homeownership programming, a complete detailed list of best practices is available in Appendix C.

Union College- Schenectady, NY

The Union-Schenectady Initiative (USI) was launched in 1998 as a broad based plan to revitalize the neighborhood to the immediate west of Union in Schenectady by offering homeownership incentives and by enhancing community resources. USI was designed to enhance Union’s competitive position by expanding housing options for students, faculty and staff, and beautifying surroundings neighborhoods. Union acquired 43 properties in the 260-parcel target area, renovated them and now uses them for student housing and a community center. The College offers a homeownership incentive program to any prospective or existing resident through an agreement with Trustco Bank for those wishing to purchase homes within target area to be owner occupied.

Union also provides up to \$1 million/year to cover full tuition cost at Union or at Schenectady County Community College for up to 2 children of qualified target neighborhood homeowners. As part of participation in the tuition subsidy and target area home buying incentives homes must be

maintained up to neighborhood standards and beneficiaries must live in the home for a minimum of 5-years.

The College also offers employee mortgages at an interest rate 2 points below market, no down-payment, no closing costs, payment by payroll deduction (if employment ends, rate jumps to 4% above market rate). Nine properties were purchased by employees between 1999-2001. Other neighborhood enhancements by the College include: a Private Montessori School, community center with free daily after-school programming, and a health and wellness center. Union established a satellite security office within the Community Center in the target neighborhood. Initiated in 2000, an officer located at the satellite office patrols the neighborhood 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Canisius College- Buffalo, NY

The Canisius Employee Assisted Housing (EAH) Program is structured as a forgivable loan program; that is, loans will be made to qualifying full time employees to assist with down payments and closing costs for residences in eligible neighborhoods. The loan will be forgiven over five years at the rate of 20% per year provided the employee remains employed at Canisius. Canisius provides qualifying employees with loans in the amount of five percent (5%) of the purchase price or \$5,000, whichever is less for homes in the designated eligible areas within three City of Buffalo Council districts. In addition, qualifying employees who purchase their home within one of the three target neighborhoods, located within eligible areas, will receive ten percent (10%) of the purchase price or \$7,000, whichever is less for homes in the target neighborhoods. Hunt Real Estate Corporation and M&T Mortgage Corporation offer special purchasing and financing benefits to Canisius employees under the EAH Program.

The EAH loans may be used for down payment or closing costs. The loan is secured by a second mortgage lien on the residence purchased until all of the conditions of the mortgage have been satisfied. The employee pays the cost of preparing and recording that mortgage at the time of closing. In the event that an employee leaves the college, sells the home or moves out of the home before the fifth anniversary, the portion of the forgivable loan that remains outstanding shall become due and payable on a monthly amortization schedule sufficient to repay the loan in full by the fifth anniversary date.

Existing employees of Canisius and new hires moving to Buffalo from outside the eight counties of Western New York will be immediately eligible to participate in the EAH program, and new hires from within the eight counties of Western New York may not participate in the EAH program until six months after their date of hire.

Delaware Avenue Neighborhood & University Heights Associates- Albany, NY

The Delaware Avenue Neighborhood in conjunction with University Heights Associates launched the Delaware Avenue Walk to Work Program in 2001 with a total of \$50,000 in grants provided by the Charitable Leadership Foundation and the assistance of the Affordable Housing Partnership of the Capital Regions, Inc. The program provided \$5,000 grants for down payment and closing costs and was administered in a targeted area directly adjacent to the University Heights Campus. Employees of businesses within the target area, not just employees of University Heights, were also eligible. The program was very successful assisting nine new homeowners purchase a home in the Delaware Avenue Neighborhood in one year.

University of Pennsylvania- Philadelphia, PA

Programming at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) began in the mid 1990s in recognition of the declining condition of West Philadelphia that potentially threatened the University's viability. Because quality public education is a key factor in where families choose to live, Penn's partnerships with the West Philadelphia community have long focused on improving the neighborhood's public schools. (See Appendix C for full education programming details.) A key vehicle for neighborhood improvement has been the University City District, or UCD – a public-private partnership that Penn helped found in 1997 with community groups, local businesses, government and other partner institutions such as Drexel University.

Penn committed its resources and expertise to upgrade the housing stock and lure new homeowners into University City. Working with community associations, other institutions and private investors, Penn invested in new-home buying and home improvement incentives to faculty and staff while also expanding housing options. After being in place since 1996, there are measurable results that can be accounted for: 386 Penn faculty and staff have purchased homes in University City, with 40% of homes being purchased for less than \$100,000; 146 Penn affiliates have taken advantage of incentives to improve home exteriors; the University itself has rehabbed 20 vacant properties and returned them to the homeownership market; Penn has raised more than \$50 million in capital to create a Neighborhood Housing Preservation and Development Fund.

Penn's efforts to improve housing and expand homeownership include: supporting some ownership through mortgage incentives; rehabbing distressed properties; maintaining moderate rental housing options; and creating new market rental opportunities.

Homeownership Plan Components

Increasing homeownership rates within the Midtown Colleges and University Plan area is key to strengthening and stabilizing those neighborhoods. Currently the City's homeownership rate is 38% compared to that of the national rate of 55% for inner cities. Over 19,700 people reside in the Midtown Plan boundaries and approximately 75% of the population is renters.

Homeownership Assistance Program

Homeownership assistance programs are a win-win for all parties involved. Such programs assist households that may have otherwise remained in the rental market to build equity and become homeowners. Sponsoring institutions benefit in a number of ways, such as increasing employee retention and job performance, and experiencing greater growth and recruitment as a result of improved neighborhood conditions and investment.

Collectively the six institutions of higher education located within the Midtown Plan area employ over 10,000 people. The neighborhoods within the Midtown Colleges and University Plan boundary should be marketed to attract their faculty and staff to purchase homes in the neighborhoods immediately adjacent to their campuses, thus encouraging staff to walk to work. Such an effort could be facilitated through the creation of an Employer Assisted Housing Program (EAH). Each institution could offer a grant or forgivable loan to their respective faculty and staff for down payment and closing costs assistance towards the purchase of a home within the Plan boundaries. Technical assistance for the creation of an Employer Assistance Program could be provided through Fannie Mae.

An additional homeownership assistance program could be established and funded through the various institutions, the City, or local foundations (i.e. Charitable Leadership Foundation), where grants or forgivable loans would be issued towards the down payment and/or closing costs for the purchase of the home for anyone looking to purchase homes within the Midtown Plan boundaries. These grants and/or forgivable loans could be tied to the length of residence to help guarantee long-term investment and commitment to the area. It is recommended that these programs be targeted in the neighborhoods adjacent to the college campuses: Pine Hills, Delaware, New Scotland/Woodlawn, and Beverwyck Neighborhoods.

The areas targeted for the homeownership programs could be established as *Homeownership Zones*, which could provide additional special incentives and homeownership programs to encourage owner occupied purchases within the Midtown Plan boundaries. City staff should explore offering additional incentives to individuals/families that purchase homes within the *Homeownership Zone*. Incentives could include, but are not limited to free or discounted admissions to college hosted event such as sports games, speakers, theatrical products, etc., discounted services needed in the purchase of a home, discounted internet, phone, cable services, discounted or free bus passes, and more. The City could also partner with local banks to offer creative first mortgage products with discounted fees, interest rates, etc., which would be offered to persons purchasing within the *Homeownership Zone*. The *Homeownership Zones* should be rolled out in phases, to maximize program impact in each neighborhood.

Rehabilitation

Encouraging existing homeowners, whether they are owner occupied or landlords, to invest in their properties is another important component of strengthening and stabilizing a neighborhood. It is recommended that local lenders be approached to identify low interest rehabilitation loan

programs. New York State agencies and non-profit organizations are another resource to explore in finding additional opportunities for grant programs for façade improvements, energy efficiency, and general rehabilitation.

Offering tax abatement programs is a great way to encourage existing homeowners to invest in their properties. The City currently runs a tax abatement program to any City homeowner that increases the value of their home through rehabilitation. This program should be explored to see if the existing program's guidelines will work within the Midtown Plan or if the guidelines need to be expanded or a new program specific for the Plan should be created.

Effective partnerships with the City's Division of Building and Codes could also help encourage investments in the Midtown Plan area's aging housing stock. Marketing the City's existing grant programs as well as any new grant and loan program specifically for the Midtown Plan in conjunction with citing code violations could help encourage individual owners to upgrade their properties.

Comprehensive Marketing Campaign

It is recommended that a Midtown Marketing Committee be formed to focus on the creation of a comprehensive marketing campaign highlighting homeownership opportunities throughout the City of Albany, with a special component directed towards the Midtown Colleges and University Plan boundaries. The Marketing Committee should consist of one member from each neighborhood association within or directly adjacent to the Midtown Plan boundaries, college representatives, and City staff.

The marketing campaign should reinforce the City of Albany as a premier location to purchase a home. The marketing strategy should take into account existing and past marketing efforts of the City of Albany. The marketing campaign should promote livable neighborhoods, reversing the trend of disinvestment in the City's neighborhoods. It is expected that the strategy will result in increased homeownership throughout the Midtown boundaries and the City of Albany.

Action Items

- A. Work with the colleges to create an Employer Assisted Housing Program.
- B. Identify additional funding sources for both homeownership and rehabilitation grants/loans.
- C. Form a marketing committee consisting of college and neighborhood representatives to help market homeownership and rehabilitation programs.
- D. Create a Homeownership Zone and outline the phasing of the Zone.
- E. Identify additional incentives to be offered within the Homeownership Zone.
- F. Perform a windshield survey of the housing stock to target homes to participate in rehabilitation programs.
- G. Review City's current tax abatement program.

Education District

Midtown Education District Principles

- A. Identify and leverage opportunities for collaboration among institutions for the betterment of institutions, businesses, and neighborhoods
- B. Create consensus among community and institutions regarding where and in what manner institutional growth should occur
- C. Create forum for regular communication/dialogue among institutions and neighborhoods
- D. Work to improve quality of life conditions in the Education District sub-area.

Best Practices

The guiding principles for the Midtown District create a vision for how programming and future development should be focused. Looking at best practices nationwide we can see how other institutions have used similar principles to create and enhance their "Education Districts", a complete detailed list of best practices is available in Appendix B.

Clark University- Worcester, MA

There are many great approaches when you look nationally that vary in scope from simply distributing information that may help improve student behavior to community-university projects that establish new public schools. Clark University (Clark) in Worcester, MA has been working for the last 15 years to stabilize and revitalize the Main South Neighborhood that encompasses Clark's Campus. In 1990 Clark began the University Park Partnership it is a collaborative effort among government, private business, neighborhood residents and religious organizations to improve the quality of life in the Main South neighborhood.

The first initiative of the University Park Partnership (UPP) was in the field of education with the creation of an "education corridor" where children in the neighborhood are offered the several of the best educational opportunities in the Country. By building partnerships between the public schools of Worcester and Clark's Hiatt Center for Urban Education, Clark is teacher training and professional development for teachers within the Worcester community. Clark has provided over \$2 million to date in tuition waivers for the training of teachers at Hiatt Center. Opportunities for teaching in the Worcester Public Schools are provided to the students and faculty of Clark. In 1997 the University Park Campus School was created to serve neighborhood children in grade 7-12. Students from Clark serve as mentors and tutors to the children of the Campus School where children also receive seminars and courses given by Clark faculty. Clark offers free tuition to neighborhood residents who are able to meet their admissions requirements.

The Main South Community Development Corporation, a significant partner in the UPP, is used as a conduit for a revolving loan fund pool for small business loans. Through this program

unconventional loans and financing techniques are used to finance the business plans of individuals who may not otherwise qualify. Clark's Graduate School of Management works with the Small Business Development Center, funded by the State and managed off of Clark's campus, to provide small business owners with technical assistance. Area businesses and residents are connected through the Main South Workforce Development Training Center, established to help residents take advantage of job opportunities within Main South.

Clark opened the Community Engagement and Volunteering Center in 2003 to serve as the base of operation for the University's volunteer efforts. Center works with organizations in Worcester to keep a record of any and all volunteer opportunities for Clark students. Internships are provided to Clark students at the Campus School homework center where they receive one on one teaching experience with students. The Clark Partners in Community program helps the elderly by pairing them with university students who can donate time during the week to help them with household work, shopping, or cooking. Clark also offers a traditional Big Brothers & Big Sister program, mentoring Worcester kids in need of guidance. All Kinds of Girls is a student-run program specifically geared toward girls in Worcester between the ages of 9 and 12. Program participants meet on campus once a week with their Clark designated mentor to work on projects and exercises that encourage communication skill and artistic expression. The honor societies at Clark also work on neighborhood clean-up programs and community oriented improvement projects.

University of Pennsylvania- Philadelphia, PA

Through the Center for Community Partnerships, University faculty and students engage in academically based community service, consisting of civic action intrinsically linked to Penn's core missions of teaching and research. Over 120 courses from a wide range of disciplines and schools link Penn students to work in the community. Through the University's Civic House, Penn students serve as tutors and mentors, while local high school students can investigate academic and career opportunities through programs at the University. Over the past decade, more than 1,700 Penn faculty, students and staff have joined together with local educators and community members in more than 130 programs at 33 different West Philadelphia public schools.

The University brought on a leading private developer of former industrial buildings to create a new 282-unit apartment/retail/office complex in a former General Electric factory just east of the campus. The Developer developed the property under a long-term lease with the University, investing \$55 million to recreate the structure as the "Left Bank." The building, which also houses Penn's Facilities and Real Estate Department, has appealed to many renters because of its close proximity to Amtrak's 30th Street Station and other major transportation hubs, as well as Philadelphia's Center City. The Left Bank has brought a new population to an area of West Philadelphia that for decades has been without residential life.

The University of Pennsylvania is the largest private employer in the City of Philadelphia and the fourth largest in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. With help and guidance from community leaders, Penn has leveraged its purchasing power, its knowledge assets and its capital resources to provide new economic opportunities for local businesses and job growth among neighborhood residents. There have been measurable benefits to the neighborhood, city and region. The University Square project, originally built as “Sansom Common,” provided \$18 million in construction contracts for local minority and women-owned business, with minority and female construction workers performing 32 percent of the labor hours. In 2001, Penn purchased over \$65.1 million in goods and services from West Philadelphia vendors, bringing the six-year total in its “Buy West Philadelphia” program to \$261.8 million.

Ohio State University- Columbus, OH

In January 1994, the president of Ohio State University (OSU) established the University Area Improvement Task Force composed of representatives of university faculty, staff and students, university community organizations, and the City of Columbus. Among the key recommendations were the creation of a non-profit redevelopment corporation and preparation of a comprehensive revitalization plan and implementation program to offer a vision for a University District. Campus Partners was formed in 1995 and was to be the non-profit redevelopment corporation identified for the comprehensive plan.

The first initiative was commercial revitalization and is underway with construction of \$100 million 450,000’ SF University Gateway Center, a mixed-use facility. Spearheaded by Campus Partners with private financing, this project allows for the demolition of sub-standard housing to be replaced by new, quality, energy-efficient housing. Public contributions include \$5 million of capital improvements. A mixture of commercial, retail, and housing will provide a student gathering point as well as economic stimulus for the community. It is expected that 450-700 jobs will be created.

Both Penn and OSU are excellent examples of community-university partnerships that utilized community planning and the leveraging of a compilation of resources to accomplish improvement goals. Clark University’s approach was similar to OSU in that it collaborated with a non-profit, the Main South CDC, to facilitate its community goals. Both Penn and Clark established a local school that sought to improve the standards for primary education and expose the university students to volunteer and teaching opportunities. Unlike Penn and OSU, Clark approached the work within the community incrementally and as part of their overall University initiatives, versus designating specific traditional “planning” efforts.

Education District Plan Components

The Plan recommends that the property generally bounded by Washington Ave., Lake Ave., Madison Ave. and Partridge St., as illustrated in Figure 1, be designated as both an “Education District” sub-area within the larger Study Area. This sub-area would provide a locus for the institutions to work on collaborative projects designed to: improve the academic fabric of the District, improve the quality of student life in the district, and to establish an outstanding model for community involvement. Figure 2 is a rendering of Ontario Street Within the Education District

illustrating the character of a new collaborative development combining student housing, retail and institutional mixed-use structures with façade improvements, streetscaping, and parking/roadway improvements. Development of this character will create a more vibrant and attractive neighborhood for students, residents, employees, and visitors.

The recommendation to create an Education District is an attempt to improve existing conditions that currently exist in this area of the City that has been primarily occupied by students. Those areas within the boundary of the proposed district are not exclusive to institutional or student use but are in need of more systematic analysis and community consensus building with regards to what type of investments need to be made to improve the area.

Block Planning & Housing Conditions Survey

The Education District sub-area has many challenges facing its revitalization including concentrations of buildings owned by absentee landlords. Further planning will need to be done on a block level to determine what types of revitalization programs and redevelopment is appropriate to enhance the building stock and stabilize the areas of extreme disinvestment. To help initiate and provide the overall framework as to what properties/blocks should be targeted, it is recommended that a *Housing Condition Study* be completed for the Education District sub-area. This study should consist of an exterior windshield survey of the homes in the area, documenting the overall condition of the property in general categories, such as *Standard*, *Minor Repair*, *Major Repair*, and *Dilapidated/Vacant*, and level of rehabilitation necessary for each property. With the completion of this study, the City could then more effectively target high priority areas and enforce its code regulations. It is recommended that such an initiative should be completed on a phased basis so that the appropriate programming can be structured and delivered those properties/blocks are identified, increasing the visual impact of the focused revitalization.

Figure 2: Ontario Street, Urban Design Rendering



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Master Campus Plans

We recommend the updating, and in some cases the creation, of Campus Master Plans for each of the participating institutions, particularly for those institutions anticipating future growth. Coordination of such master plans will allow the various institutions to identify space, land and parking projects to anchor development of the Education District and the larger Study Area.

Student Housing

Portions of the Upper Pine Hills Neighborhood are exhibiting severe signs of deterioration and deferred maintenance. This area is located in the heart of the proposed Education District. A large segment of the students from the Midtown Colleges and University District Institutions are reported to live there. It is also estimated that approximately 4,000 students that attend classes at SUNY's Uptown campus also live in this area. Bus routes to the Uptown campus serve this area.

Past market research reports that students are attracted to this area because it is more affordable than on campus housing and/or that it represents freedom from housing policies that are enforced on campus. However, trends are indicating students prefer newer upscale managed apartment developments with amenities such as high-speed internet access over the older independent housing choices offered in the neighborhoods.

In response to these student-housing trends, there are a number of qualified student residence developers and managers who would welcome the opportunity to respond to an RFP to be involved in the management and development of a student residential community located in the Education District. It may be possible to utilize existing housing stock and rate structures for a portion of the student community.

The development of a student wellness center tied into the AMC that would provide health related services for students at neighboring institutions would complement any collaborative student housing development. The Center would provide for 24-hour services with staffing being provided by AMC and Albany School of Pharmacy. The Center could provide AMC and the School of Pharmacy with an additional location to train their students on a volunteer or stipend basis.

An additional compliment to the citing of any collaborative student housing would also be the development of a student activity center that would combine many of the activities provided for on campus in a central location where all of the institutions share services and can congregate. The facility would house an athletic facility (specifics to be determined), meeting rooms, lounge areas, food courts, and study areas.

Community-University Relations

Community-university relations, or town-gown, committees educate students about off campus responsibilities, good citizenship, transportation alternatives, and alcohol awareness. They also distribute information to the community and students regarding over-occupancy, house party

regulations, and local property ordinances. The town-gown committee of Blacksburg, VA (Virginia Tech) is providing property managers, agents, and owners with technical assistance, lease information for landlords and managers. Rutgers University, (New Jersey) has an extensive off-campus housing web site with technical assistance for renters and landlords providing unit listings.

Locally, the University at Albany has a Committee on Community and University Relations, which the College of Saint Rose, the Albany College of Pharmacy, the Albany Medical College, the Sage Colleges, Hudson Valley Community College, University Heights Associates, and Albany Law School, are members. Committee members also include local businesses located in student area, or Education district sub-area, and representatives from neighborhood associations, and local police and fire stations. The committee is a result of the first recommendation of the original Task Force on University and Community Relations formed in 1989 by the then Mayor of the City of Albany and the President of the University at Albany. The Task Force was formed as a reaction to the increase in the number and intensity of complaints received by both University and City officials concerning the behavior of college students off campus. The complaints came from concerned neighbors, neighborhood associations, and the local police departments and were a result of parties in off campus apartments involving alcohol as well as traffic to and from neighborhood taverns. The problems reported involved the abuse of alcohol by students, noise complaints involving students yelling and loud music, large and unruly parties, and persistent litter and code violation problems.

In the spring of 1990, the report of the task force was released and included both proactive and reactive measures as part of a comprehensive and multifaceted approach to improve the situation in the neighborhoods where off campus students traditionally live. The Committee on Community and University Relations was established to both insure that original Task Force recommendations were implemented and that additional initiatives would be developed as the Committee's scope of issues grew.

The original twelve recommendation of the Task Force:

1. The University and the City of Albany will establish a continuous, permanent committee to serve as a policy advisory and review group to meet on a regular basis. This committee, a representative group of all parties involved similar to the membership of the task force will report directly to the University President and to the Mayor.
2. The Bureau of Code Enforcement will provide a more systematic, formal mechanism for residents to issue complaints and provide them with a follow-up report. In addition, the Bureau of Code Enforcement, Albany Police Department and other City agencies should aggressively enforce laws and regulations of the City.
3. The University will mandate a self-regulating governance system for Greek letter organizations empowered to adjudicate issues of misconduct.
4. The University will offer mediation services for students and their neighbors to resolve their problems.

5. The University will take a proactive role in making landowners aware of our expectations by:
 - 1) requiring verification of certificates of occupancy by all landowners renting to students and
 - 2) prohibiting landlords from listing their rental if they do not comply with University regulations.
6. The University will articulate to our students, through publications, meetings, seminars, etc., what are acceptable and unacceptable behaviors as community members in the City of Albany.
7. The University shall undertake a study to seriously consider the feasibility of supervised on – campus housing for Greek letter organizations.
8. The University will utilize the student media to get information to the students. Newspapers, publications and radio stations should provide space and time for City departments and residents committees to address these issues on a regular basis. The University will explore the possibility of having a regular weekly or biweekly column in the Albany Student Press (ASP) for the City and neighborhood associations.
9. The University and the City should create visual messages for students upon their arrival back into the community such as posters and flyers outlining City ordinances and penalties, and providing guidelines on expected behavior.
10. In an effort to formalize their process, the University's Off-Campus Housing Office and the Albany Police Department should log various complaints of this nature to provide a flow chart to visually target problem areas for use by all parties involved.
11. The Albany Police Department and the university Police Department will explore the advisability of increasing their presence in student communities immediately adjacent to the uptown and downtown campuses. The University will also consider the implications of legislation to extend the power of campus police beyond campus.
12. The University will explore the possibility of providing on-campus and off-campus facilities to accommodate social activities of our students.

The committee has used these 12 recommendations as guidelines for special programming off and on campus such as: the Neighborhood Spring Cleanup Days; the Trash to Treasure recycling program for students moving out of on and off campus apartments, giving them an opportunity to donate their unwanted items to local charities; establishment of an Off-Campus hotline for students and residents with public safety and quality of life complaints; the Whistle Watch Safety Program; and their annual Lighting and Safety Survey of off-campus student neighborhoods. These are just several examples of existing programming that the Committee supports from a larger array of year round programming that address both public safety and quality of life issues for students and residents.

It is recommended that this Committee be strengthened by regular attendance of all of the institutional and neighborhood stakeholders. The City should also work with the Committee on a regular format to promote both institutional and City programming and student participation in community activities.

Community-University Development Opportunities& Partnerships

The development of an intergenerational daycare facility is recommended to house and care for married student's children, single parent children, and children of the staff and faculty of area institutions. The facility would be conveniently located to attract seniors wanting to participate in daily daycare activities. The location of the facility would be convenient enough to address the problem of transportation of seniors to and from the facility in conjunction with the proximity of the student housing facility. The employees of the Daycare would be a combination of senior volunteers and education students from the neighboring institutions. Ideally, housing for the married students and the seniors would be within walking distance of each other.

The development of a Co-Operative Teacher Learning/Training Center facility to house a training center that would serve the needs of the Albany Public School System that would be staffed and managed by a collaboration of the Schools of Education from St. Rose, SUNY and Sage Colleges.

Parking & Transportation

Interviews completed for this study indicate that the parking facilities of St. Rose and the SUNY Downtown Campus are near or at capacity at certain times during the week. It is recommended that a Midtown Transportation Subcommittee be formed to develop and implement measures that can help reduce parking demand, making it easier for employees and students to take transit, walk or bicycle to work or school. Specific actions the Transportation Subcommittee should investigate are:

- Partnering with the Capital District Transit Authority (CDTA) to offer annual transit passes to participating households as part of the Midtown homeownership incentive package.
- Assisting individual institutions in identifying transportation demand management strategies responsive to their particular needs. Examples include: scheduling student classes and/or employee work hours to spread parking demand evenly over the week; notifying students and employees of the transit benefits available to them via intracampus e-mail; and adding bicycle parking or additional walkways to campus.
- Gathering data about where students and employees live and their travel patterns to better meet their needs. With this information CDTA may be able to respond through route or service changes, while the institutions may be able to respond by offering satellite classrooms close to where clusters of students live.

The Midtown Transportation Subcommittee should be comprised of representatives from each institution and entity in the larger Midtown Technical Committee, as well as from the Capital District Transit Authority and the Albany Parking Authority

Action Items

- A. Encourage institutions to update/create their campus master plans.
- B. Complete a housing conditions survey of Education District sub-area.

- C. Utilize conditions survey and campus plans to conduct block-planning initiatives within Education sub-area.
- D. Pursue community-university partnerships with public schools, community-outreach and volunteer organizations.
- E. Utilize the Community-University Relations Board to strengthen dialogue about public safety and quality of life issues between institutions, students, residents, and business owners.
- F. Create a Parking sub-committee of the Midtown Technical Committee to explore parking and traffic issues among institutions and possible shared solutions.

Park South/Albany Medical Center (AMC) Expansion

The southeast half of the Park South neighborhood is not included within the Study Area boundaries. However, the AMC expansion along with other market factors will help improve conditions throughout the entire neighborhood. As detailed in the *2004 Park South Redevelopment Plan* by Design Collective and Randall Gross/Development Economics, Park South's strategic location adjacent to the Lark Street retail/entertainment district, Washington Park and the AMC campus, as well as its close proximity to the University Heights campus, positions the Park South Neighborhood to attract a diverse mix of uses into the area, including the following:

- Institutional (AMC Expansion)
- Market-rate residential (for-sale and rental)
- Senior Housing
- Neighborhood Retail along Lark Street and New Scotland Ave (i.e. dining, coffee/sandwich shop, bakery, convenience retail, etc.)
- Hotel/conference

AMC has significant expansion plans for the blocks between Robin Street, Dana Avenue, New Scotland Avenue and Myrtle Street in the Park South neighborhood. The majority of this land is currently owned by AMC, enabling easy expansion, which will include office and clinical space. Such an expansion will serve as an anchor for this neighborhood, which has experienced significant deterioration and disinvestments over the years. The AMC expansion within Park South provides an opportunity to encourage additional new investment within the neighborhood to help transform its current negative image.

Neighborhood Commercial Districts

Neighborhood Commercial District Principles

- A. Work with neighborhoods, institutions, and existing businesses to strengthen commercial uses in Midtown
- B. Strengthen and protect existing C-1 Districts

- C. Maintain and protect pedestrian-oriented commercial development
- D. Identify and target commercial uses currently absent from existing C-1 districts

Neighborhood Commercial District Development Opportunities

Based on the market analysis completed for this study, there are four main retail nodes within the Study Area that can be strengthened with the increased residential, institutional and commercial development, as well as income growth expected for the Study Area. These retail nodes include:

- New Scotland Avenue
- Madison Ave/Main Ave
- Quail Street/Western Ave
- Quail Street/Madison Ave

Based on the Market Overview (Appendix A), the following retail programming and improvements are recommended for the above retail nodes.

New Scotland Avenue

With the expansion of the AMC campus and the redevelopment of Park South, New Scotland Avenue between Madison Avenue and Myrtle Street holds the potential to become a neighborhood retail corridor for the new and existing residential and institutional development in the area. This area could support approximately 10,000 – 30,000 square feet of retail development of the following store types:

- Coffee/Sandwich Shop
- Convenience retail, i.e. dry cleaners, bank, video/dvd store
- Medical supplies related retail

Retail Nodes at Madison/Main, Madison/Quail, and Western/Quail

The existing retail nodes at Madison Avenue/Main Avenue, Madison Ave/Quail Street, and Western Avenue/Quail Street hold the potential to be strengthened due to the expected residential, student, and institutional growth in the area. Approximately a total of 20,000 – 30,000 square feet of additional retail development could be supported in these areas over the next 10 years, as well as an upgrade/expansion of existing retail in response to the expected household income growth and building improvements within the surrounding neighborhoods. The types of retail that would be suitable for these nodes include:

- Neighborhood/convenience retail
 - Drug Store
 - Restaurants/Bars
 - Dry Cleaners
 - Bank Branches
 - Video/DVD Store
 - Card/Gift Shop
 - Convenience Mart
 - Specialty Food

Neighborhood Commercial District Plan Components

In addition to the four neighborhood commercial, or C-1, districts listed above, which are what we can consider centrally located within the study area, there are now several other C-1 districts included in the Plan as a result of valuable public comment that caused the expansion of the original Plan boundaries. The general recommendations to strengthen the existing districts are well stated, however, there is a need within many of the existing C-1 districts to do more a more detailed assessment of retail and commercial needs. There is also a need that any C-1 district recommendations regarding use, design, and density be recommendations made as part of a public process involving the neighborhood and local businesses.

Block Planning

Similar to the approach taken in the “Education District” sub-area, to properly assess the development opportunities and needs of the C-1 districts block planning will need to be done. Because each neighborhood is unique, and therefore so is the C-1 district that serves it, a one-size fits all improvement program will not work as our approach. It is recommended that the existing C-1 districts are reviewed to determine where grouping districts together for the purpose of block planning makes sense. For example, there are several C-1 zoned properties along Western Avenue that are non-contiguous that could be considered one district. After the C-1 districts are grouped there should be a preliminary assessment done, and a priority list made of what districts are greatest need of block planning. A steering committee of representatives from the neighborhood where the C-1 district is located, businesses owners located within the C-1 district, and members of the City Planning Department to should be convened for each block planning session.

The first block planning initiative of this kind will begin in June of 2005 in the Upper Madison C-1 district. The initiative will build upon the strengths of the reuse of the Madison Theatre and the series of restaurants located just west of the theatre. The block planning process will allow residents and business owners to discuss the issues they feel are important to improve the success of the district and what uses would be appropriate for any vacant storefronts.

Retail Recruitment

To encourage new and upgraded retail development within the Study Area, it is recommended that the City of Albany develop an outreach/marketing programs to retailers, brokers and developers. This program should be designed to assist developers, retailers, and other interested parties about retail market opportunities in within the Study Area and throughout the City of Albany, coordinate the City's participation in the development process, and strengthen and stabilize existing neighborhood retail centers. More detailed information on such a program is provided in Appendix D.

Action Items

- A. Work with institutions to determine what retail and commercial needs students have a demand for that are not being serviced on campus.
- B. Work with residents and business owners create a priority list of improvement needs for existing C-1 districts as well as building consensus on what uses are wanted and unwanted within the district.
- C. Develop a framework for block planning within each C-1 district with neighborhood representatives, business owners, and City representatives.
- D. Enhance and enforce design standards within the C-1 districts to ensure that their character will not be impacted by any adaptive reuse or redevelopment.
- E. Utilize the Neighborhood Marketing Committees being formed to promote homeownership to also focus on marketing the C-1 districts as amenities to City Living.
- F. Focus on recruitment of new businesses that will be compatible within existing C-1 districts where there are vacancies.

SECTION 2: IMPLEMENTATION AGENDA

This section highlights the recommended Implementation Agenda, which is intended to help the City organize and initiate the Plan implementation process. The Plan provides a long-range program for improvement and development within Albany. The Plan cannot be accomplished all at once; projects and actions will have to be scheduled over a period of years. The Implementation Agenda suggests a timeframe in which to develop Plan components, but it is strongly encouraged that the listing of projects and the priorities be reviewed and updated at least once a year.

IMPLEMENTATION AGENDA, MAY 2005

Plan Component & Guiding Principles	Action Item	Participants	Timeline
Homeownership			
Utilize the employment base of the institutions of higher education to increase rates of homeownership.	Work with Colleges to create an Employer Assisted Housing (EAH) Program.	Institutions and their faculty and staff, and a participating local lender.	Finalize funding sources and detail of an EAH program to launch program by August of 2005.
	Create a Homeownership Zone and outline the phasing of the Zone.	Midtown Technical Committee, participating local lenders, City of Albany Planning Department, and neighborhood associations.	Finalize Zone boundaries, and outline phasing by August of 2005.
	Identify additional incentives to be offered within the Homeownership Zone.	Midtown Technical Committee, participating local lenders, City of Albany Planning Department.	Finalize Zone incentives by August of 2005, prior to launch of EAH program.
Encourage rehabilitation of existing housing stock. Encourage high quality Rehabilitation. Protect mixed income nature of Midtown neighborhoods.	Identify additional funding sources for both homeownership and rehabilitation grants/loans.	City of Albany Planning Department, Midtown Technical Committee, and a participating local lender.	Identify additional funding in the next 3 to 5 months.
	Perform a windshield survey of the housing stock to target homes to participate in rehabilitation programs.	City of Albany Planning Department	To begin as soon as rehabilitation funding sources are confirmed.
	Review City's current tax abatement program.	City of Albany Planning Department	Begin Immediately

	Form a marketing committee to help market homeownership and rehabilitation programs.	Midtown Technical Committee, participating local lenders, City of Albany Planning Department, and Neighborhood Associations.	Underway, committee had first meeting on May 12, 2005 and participation will be ongoing throughout Plan implementation.
Education District			
Identify and leverage opportunities for collaboration among institutions for the betterment of institutions, businesses, and neighborhoods. Create consensus among community and institutions regarding where and in what manner institutional growth should occur.	Encourage institutions to update/create their campus master plans.	City of Albany Planning Department and Midtown Technical Committee.	Begin Immediately
	Complete a housing conditions survey of Education District sub-area.	City of Albany Planning Department	Complete Between August and October of 2005.
	Utilize conditions survey and campus plans to conduct block-planning initiatives within Education sub-area.	City of Albany Planning Department, Midtown Technical Committee, and Neighborhood Associations.	Begin immediately after housing conditions survey is complete.
Create a forum for regular communication/dialogue among institutions and neighborhoods. Work to improve quality of life conditions in District.	Utilize the Community-University Relations Board to strengthen dialogue about public safety and quality of life issues between institutions, students, residents, and business owners.	City of Albany Planning Department, Midtown Technical Committee, and Neighborhood Associations.	Begin Immediately
	Pursue community-university partnerships with public schools, community-outreach and volunteer organizations.	Midtown Technical Committee, and Neighborhood Associations.	Begin Immediately

	Create a Parking sub-committee of the Midtown Technical Committee to explore parking and traffic issues among institutions and possible shared solutions.	Midtown Technical Committee, and City of Albany Planning Department.	Underway, committee had first meeting on March 23, 2005 and participation will be ongoing throughout Plan implementation.
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Neighborhood Commercial Districts

Work with neighborhoods, institutions, and existing businesses to strengthen commercial uses in Midtown. Strengthen and protect existing C-1 Districts.	Work with residents and business owners create a priority list of improvement needs for existing C-1 districts as well as building consensus on what uses are wanted and unwanted within the district.	City of Albany Planning Department, Midtown Technical Committee, and Neighborhood Associations.	Begin in June 2005
	Develop a framework for block planning within each C-1 district with neighborhood representatives, business owners, and City representatives.	City of Albany Planning Department, Midtown Technical Committee, Neighborhood Associations, and business owners.	Begin in June of 2005
Maintain and protect pedestrian-oriented commercial development.	Enhance and enforce design standards within the C-1 districts to ensure that their character will not be impacted by any adaptive reuse or redevelopment.	City of Albany Planning Department and City of Albany Code Enforcement.	Begin Immediately
Identify and target commercial uses currently absent from existing C-1 districts.	Work with institutions to determine what retail and commercial needs students have a demand for that are not being serviced on campus.	Midtown Technical Committee, and City of Albany Planning Department.	Begin Immediately
	Utilize the Neighborhood Marketing Committees being formed to promote homeownership to also focus on marketing the C-1 districts as amenities to City Living.	Neighborhood Associations, City of Albany Planning Department, and Midtown Technical Committee.	Begin when agenda for marketing campaign is developed.
	Focus on recruitment of new businesses that will be compatible within existing C-1 districts where there are vacancies.	City of Albany Planning Department.	Begin as soon as first C-1 block planning effort is complete.